

Hedging in Interview Questions as a Politeness Strategy

Estabraq R. Almusaway

College of Basic Education / Mustansiriyah University

estabraq60@yahoo.com

Hussein. D. Al-Hassnawi

Maarif J. Thamir

College of Arts/University of Kufa

College of Translation and Languages/University of Kufa

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Abstract

This research aims at analyzing the phenomenon of hedging used in interview questions. Generally speaking, hedging is one of the most important techniques in speaking by which utterances sound more tactful and, thus, accepted by the addressees. The object of this paper is to investigate hedges in three interviews with some public figures (Queen Rania, Giorgio Armani, and Prince William). In doing so, the modal of hedges taxonomy has been adopted in classifying hedges. It is suggested that modal auxiliary verbs are the widely used hedging device by interviewers as it is a perfect tool for showing politeness. For modal auxiliary verbs are thought to be an indirect way of expressing thoughts and opinions, and hence work as dual protection for both faces of the speaker and that of the addressee as well.

The present study is divided into two parts: part one includes the concept of hedging and its types in addition some related issues like, politeness and interview questions, whereas the second part embraces the methodology, data analysis and results. It is found that modal auxiliary verbs are used abundantly as a basic hedge type in asking questions during interviews.

Key words: hedging, politeness, and interview questions.

التملص في الإجابة في أسئلة المقابلة كاستراتيجية للتأدب

استيرق رشيد ابراهيم الموسوي

كلية التربية الاساسية/ الجامعة المستنصرية

معارف جمال ثامر

حسين ضاحي الحسنوي

كلية الترجمة واللغات/ جامعة الكوفة

كلية الاداب/ جامعة الكوفة

الخلاصة

يهدف البحث الى تحليل ظاهرة التملص المستخدمة في اسئلة المقابلة وتعتبر هذه الظاهرة من اهم تقنيات الحديث بشكل عام والتي فيها الاقوال تبدو أكثر لباقة و لهذا تكون مقبولة من قبل المستمع.

ان الغرض من هذا البحث هو اجراء اختبار لثلاث مقابلات لشخصيات معروفة وهم الملكة رانيا وجورج ارماني واخيرا الامير وليم. لقد تبني البحث نظرية لثلاثية التملص في تصنيف هذه الظاهرة، واقتربت الافعال المساعدة كمودل يستخدم بشكل واسع كأداة للتملص في الحديث من قبل المقابلين وبنفس الوقت تبدا كأداة ممتازة لبيان التأدب في الحديث. ويعتقد بأن مودل الافعال المساعدة هو طريقة غير مباشرة للتعبير عن الاراء والافكار وعليه فهي تعمل حماية لوجهين اي للمتكلم والمستمع.

تقسم هذه الدراسة الى جزئين: يتضمن الجزء الاول مفهوم ظاهرة التملص وانواعها بالاضافة الى بعض المفاهيم المتعلقة بالتأدب وأسئلة المقابلة بينما يتناول الجزء الثاني طرق التحليل والفرضيات والمعطيات والنتائج حيث وجد ان الافعال المساعدة تستخدم بشكل واسع كنوع اساسي من انواع التملص في طرح الأسئلة اثناء المقابلة.

الكلمات الدالة: التملص، التأدب واسئلة المقابلة.

1. Chapter One: Theoretical Background

1.1 Introduction

The skill of using vague language is considered as a pragmatic competence. Vague language has many possible pragmatic functions, that is to say, marking politeness, indicating solidarity with one's interlocutor, or even to soften a request [1:32]. The vagueness of language is often produced by the use of hedges, which are single- or multi-word expressions used to express uncertainty about the content of information presented in order to reduce its impact.

Much attention has been paid to hedging in recent years in relation to conversation rules and social conventions. Thus, it is the basic strategy used for facilitating turn-taking, showing politeness and mitigate face-threats. For linguists, hedging is interesting and since it is a means by which vagueness is conveyed purposely.

Hedging is used by both speakers and writers to convey doubt or certainty towards a statement and showing the degree of confidence they design ate to their claim. By hedges, writers allow their readers to evaluate the validity of the assertion. Hedging is considered to be forms of encoding verbal and non-verbal behavior with the aim of saving face, thus playing a critical role in interaction strategies(ibid).It is hypothesized that interviewers basically draw on modal auxiliary verbs in issuing their questions.

1.2 Hedging Definition

Lakoff views hedges as words whose meaning implicitly involves fuzziness, words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy[2:271] and he gives details about words and phrases manifesting hedging power like (rather ,very ,in a manner of speaking) setting certain rules in how to consider linguistic items as hedges. Likewise, Lakoff [2:213] also illustrates the fact that hedges interact with felicity conditions for other utterances and with the rules of conversation and hence setting the boundaries for interpreting hedges as modifications governed by pragmatic factors.

According to Brown and Levinson [3:145] a hedge can be defined "as a particle word or phrase that modifies the degree or membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a set; itsays of that membership that it is partial or true only in certain respects or that it is more true and complete than perhaps might be expected". Chafe [4:270] says that hedges are often limited to expressions that show the match between a piece of knowledge and a category is less than perfect.

Hedging represents a critical aspect of language as using the appropriate hedges reflects a high degree of efficiency in social interaction as it demonstrates the faculty of expressing degrees of certainty and mastering rhetorical strategies needed in certain circumstances. Hedging refers to any linguistic technique used to show either a lack of utter commitment to the truth value or unwillingness to express it, [5:1]. According to Meyers [6:8] hedges are counted as positive or negative politeness strategies whose purpose is to reduce threat to the addressees' negative face through mitigating the claims and giving the addressee the opportunity to judge or show solidarity with the discourse community by displaying responses that imply shared desires and knowledge .Hedges can be used as an armour for protecting the addresser who anticipates the possibility of negative consequences of being proved wrong or criticized and then lessens the commitment to the statement.

1.3 Hedging Devices

1.3.1 Modal Auxiliaries

Modal verbs reveal the speakers' attitude and help expressing ideas in an indirect way,[6: 149-59]. This makes modal verbs perfect choices as hedging devices. Moreover, they allow the speakers to be imprecise about the content of information and thus avoiding face threatening acts and formulating illocutions so as not to cause offense to the hearer. It is viewed that modal verbs, especially shall and will, express probability or certainty while should and would show different degrees of hesitation and tentativeness in the speaker statement and thus can be taken as playing a hedging role when such reading is present.

1.3.2 Lexical Verbs with Modal Meaning

lexical modal verbs are compared to what is called speech act verbs which perform acts like evaluating, assuming or doubting rather than a mere description: the epistemic seem and appear, also believe, assume, suggest, estimate, indicate, speculate etc. When used as hedging devices these verbs display the speaker's strong belief in the truth of an utterance or, completely the opposite, the speaker doubt about the utterance as it is not more than a personal opinion.

1.3.3 Adjectival, Adverbial, and Nominal Modal Phrases

This group of modal phrases possesses hedging power when used epistemic ally to reduce the strength of the nouns they denote and they usually form a predicate with the (to be) verb: (It is) possible, probable, un/likely. Modal nouns express epistemic certainty or, the opposite, doubt: assumption, probability, estimate, suggestion, likelihood, claim, doubt, possibility, etc.

1.3.4 Approximates of Degree, Quantity, Frequency and Time

Approximates can occur under the form of adjectives and/or adverbs as a mean of weakening the meaning of the speech part they go with: somewhat, somehow, a lot, much, little, scarcely, about, approximately, roughly, hardly, etc. Such hedges are used when the accurate amount is irrelevant or unknown, when the speaker wants to avoid uncertainty about quantity in the cases when numbers or amounts employed are undecided etc.

1.3.5 Discourse Epistemic or Evidential Phrases

Discourse epistemic is used to mark the source of information as indirect or rumor (It has been said that, people say), the author has doubts and hesitations regarding the truth of what follows (To tell the truth, I dare say, I have a notion) or, the opposite, he is certain and commits himself to the utterance (To our knowledge To be sure, Upon my word, I can tell you, It is our view that, We feel that).

1.3.6 If Clauses

Mostly, if clauses show hypothetical meaning, so they suggest uncertainty along with other epistemic markers which may occur within (If clause) to reinforce the speaker's doubt in the truth of the utterance. If clauses are the preferred choice for showing hypothetical meaning with actions which are seen possible only under certain conditions. The reason behind that, is the fact that they play a basic role as hedges for invoking potential hindrances in the way of their past or future actions which could help them deny responsibility for the truth value of their statements. Typical conditional clauses may contain explicit or implicit conditions: If true, Unless..., Should one, If anything, etc.

1.3.7 Negative Constructions (Litotes)

According to Salager -Meyer [6:60-66] the term litotes refers to a figure of speech in which understatement is used to show rhetorical effect when an idea is

expressed by denying its opposite, basically using negating the negative. For example, rather than saying that something is attractive (or even very attractive), one might just say it is "not unattractive." Litotes is a form of understatement, thus the effect gained from using such figure of speech is that of showing appreciation with reservation. Its purpose is to prevent expressing praise too enthusiastically. [6: 67-71].

1.3.8 Compound and Multiple Hedges (Harmonic Combinations)

Lyons [7: 807] Coates [8: 45] state that harmonic combinations are constructed by combining of a modal auxiliary and another modal word to express the same degree or kind of modality. A harmonic phrase may refer to an element found in the context of the modal verb which emphasize, echoes or disambiguates, [8: 41]. Harmonic combinations refer to two expressions with the same meaning of a modal which are reciprocally reinforcing, [8:45]. Modally harmonic adverbs play an important role in contributing to the modal meaning comprised in the sentence by lessening the ambiguity of the modal meaning. Accordingly, the most common types of compound hedges are:

- a. Modal auxiliary + lexical verb/ modal adverb: it would indicate that; it would seem/appear.
- b. Lexical verb followed by a reinforcing hedging adjective / adverb which are divided also into:
 1. Multiple hedging: it indicates the presence of more than one hedge, not necessarily inside the same structure, but within the exact utterance .e.g. a very good sort of.
 2. Triple Hedging : (It seems reasonable to assume that)
 3. Quadruple Hedging constructions, however rare, are plausible : It may appear virtually unlikely that , It would seem somewhat unlikely that etc.(ibid)

1.4 Interview Questions

Broadly speaking, during interviews, speakers usually convey information and express their opinions. These activities are basically done as part of responses to questioning. Questioning is the major interactional and institutional task of the interviews. Interviewers are required to elicit interviewees' opinions and information for the sake of over-hearers, [9: 121]. In addition, interviewers must retain a naturalistic position. They are not allowed to argue with interviewee's viewpoint, neither to support nor defend it. This goal can be done only through questioning, [10:1].

The question and answer pattern is the hallmark feature of interviews. This means that the interview role is to ask the interviewee certain questions and that the interviewee in turn answers them. Moreover, the interviewee must wait until the interviewer finish before providing a response.

1.5 Politeness

Brown and Levinson [4:67] concern themselves with two types of politeness: positive politeness and negative politeness. Positive politeness is defined as a face saving act which tends to show solidarity and emphasizing that both speakers have the same goals. Whereas negative politeness refers to a face saving act concerned with showing deference and highlights the importance of others concern or time and sometimes an apology is offered for interruption or imposition.

Brown and Levinson concentrate mainly on negative politeness strategies which are manifested in hedging the illocutionary force of an utterance, hedging any of the felicity conditions of the speech actor, hedging any of the Gricean maxims. Consider following examples:

1. Hedged Per formative

I must request that you stay out.

2. A felicity conditions in a request ,a hearer ability to carry out the act

Take the bags off the table if you can manage.

3. The maxim of quality expresses full responsibility for truth of proposition.

I hope the plane has already took off.

There are Hedges which make the utterance more polite.

Would you be so kind as to give me a drive.

Other hedges do not have such effect.

The length of the boat approximately three meters.

Moreover, in some cases, politeness does not flow from hedging.

Sir, where is your passport?

4. Chapter Two: Data Analysis and Conclusion

2.1 Data Sample and Procedure

The data of this study consist of three interviews .The first interview retrieved from ABC. News website: [11] in which the interviewer Diane Sawyer hosting Queen Rania. The second one retrieved from CNN news website [12]Stan Grant interviewing fashion designer Giorgio Armani. The third interview is with prince William retrieved from BBC news website [13]. The interviews are to be analyzed in terms of the devices employed by the interviewer's questions.

2.2 Data Analysis and Results

It is important to maintain that not all hedging expressions used in English language are included in data analysis, for compound hedges, and negative constructions are not found in the interview samples .This is basically attributed to the interviewer's style.

The results of the analysis will be displayed in a table showing the frequency of each form of hedging. The aim is to find out, then, which type of hedging scores higher frequency. Each category will be marked in bold type and by using an abbreviation for each category as follows: **(A)** stands for Adverbials, adjectival, and for nominal modal phrases; **(ED)** stands for Epistemic discourse; **(MA)** for modal auxiliary verbs; **(ML)** for modal lexical verbs; **(AP)** for approximates. **(IC)** stands for if clause.

Transcript of the first interview, [11].

SAWYER:

*Just a quick question about the news of the day, because **as we know(ED)**, the president of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas is meeting with President Obama and with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel. The president has said people are too cynical. Are people too cynical? Do you really **think (ML)** a breakthrough is possible? In this climate, at this time?*

In the above question, the interviewer uses the hedge (as we know) to show certainty of an actual meeting that has taken place between the president Mahamoud Abbas and Obama along with the Israeli prime minister. Then, she uses the word (think) to express her uncertainty and doubt of any possible progress in the Palestinian affairs.

SAWYER:

*Another achievement, which **many (AP)** people increasingly **think (ML)** is the key to this planet, is education. And you've established something [I Goal: Education for All]. This is every -- every person, every child **will (MA)** begin to have an education by the year 2015. **Can (MA)** that be done that soon? Mate, at this time?*

Sawyer talks about the vital role of education and the fact that such matter is of a great importance to people. She hedges the word (people) by using the

approximate (many) to express the unlimited number of individuals interested in education. Additionally, she relies upon the lexical modal verb (think) to express impreciseness and lack of commitment on the part of people concerning the importance of education in society. Then sawyer uses the modal auxiliary (will) to talk about the probable project of teaching children. Afterwards, she employs the word (can) to question the probability of achieving the goal of spreading education all around the world in the time specified which is thought to be done by 2015.

SAWYER:

I believe(ED) you are the first member of a royal family to be on Twitter.

The occurrence of the word (believe) emphasizes the interviewer's belief or certainty in what she is saying, that is, queen Raina is the first member of a royal family who is active on Twitter. By using this modal verb, the speaker signals that what she says is simply her personal opinion. Additionally, this hedge is commonly used for inviting the listener to adopt the speaker's perspective towards certain issue at hand.

SAWYER:

I love the picture you posted of the two of you. And -- I'll (MA) mangle what you said. But it was basically savor these moments before your kids decide it's not cool to be seen with you.

Sawyer here draws on the modal auxiliary (will) due to the possibility that she might distort or deform what queen Raina has already said about a photo of her with her children. Accordingly, sawyer exhibits the probability of committing such deed.

SAWYER:

We should (MA) tell everyone, by the way, that you have a site to address stereotypes. And one of them you tackled was the head covering. People write your questions. People write you things they think and you tackle them? You address them?

In this question, the interviewer makes use of the hedge (should) to reduce the strength of the claim about the existence of a site that belongs to queen Rania, and that the site is used to discuss stereotypes in society. This is so, because (should) is linked with speculation.

(Table 1: Frequency and percentage of hedging usage in queen Rania)

Percentage	Frequency	Hedging device category
%44	4	Modal auxiliary verbs
%22	2	Modal lexical verbs
—	—	Adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal phrases
%11	1	Approximates of degree ,quantity and time
%22	2	Discourse epistemic

Transcript of the second interview,[12].

GRANT: *The luxury market brand in Asia, in general (AP), has become more sophisticated, and they've become wealthier. How much potential (A) is there? Is there more growth in a market like Asia, and in particular (AP), China, than you'd (MA) find, say, in Europe, which is going through tough economic times right now?*

Grant first employs the approximates (in general) and (in particular) for he does not have enough information about the quantity of the luxury market brand in Asia and China. Thus, he refuses to commit himself to a specific number about which he is not sure.

Furthermore, Grant uses the nominal hedge (potential) implying a certain degree of probability about what to be found there. That is to say, the speaker softens his claim and that he acknowledges the fact that what he says might be inaccurate. Grant hedges his question by the implementation of (would).

Consequently, he expresses his hesitation and tentativeness when asking the fashion designer Giorgio Armani whether he finds Asian market more prosperous and economically successful than Europe's. By doing so, Grant relies on fuzziness in issuing his question.

GRANT: *That's a really good answer, because if I think of Armani, I don't think of fashion, I think of style. This is a victory of style over fashion. Is that what you're about? Are you about creating something classic? Something that is lasting and not something that may (MA) just be this year's look?*

The interviewer is uncertain about the interviewee's future intentions that is, he indicates doubt concerning Armani's new fashion line wondering whether it will be timeless species or a one year's look. To achieve his purpose, he hedges this question using the modal (may).

GRANT: *Reading about you, didn't have an easy childhood. Of course, your childhood was set against a backdrop of so much (AP) turmoil in your country and war - what was your experience, living through those years? What did it teach you?*

Talking about Armani's difficult childhood, Grant tries to describe the degree of misery and chaos through the use of the approximate (much). For the interviewer wishes to create vagueness about the quantity as he does not want his utterance to be precise due to the lack of adequate information.

GRANT: *I want to talk about your parents. And I understand (ED) you didn't see a lot of (AP) your father. He was very busy, he was working all the time. And, of course, you lost your father. But your mother - your mother has had a great sense of style. Is that where you got it from? Was she a really pivotal figure in your life?*

First, Grant draws on the lexical modal (understand) to show his doubt of what follows. He is not sure of the nature of the relationship between Armani and his father. Grant stands in the shadow stating things the way he heard them. He again depends on the approximate of quantity as a hedge. He does so in order to make things fuzzy when talking about Armani's life. The interviewer says (a lot of) as he does not know the exact amount of time of that absence.

GRANT: *How do you stay ahead of the trend when you have such a fast moving world, now? So many (AP) more competitors. So much (AP) more intensity in the industry. Technology has changed so much (AP). We're seeing the likes of Twitter and so on. How has that impacted the way you see the company and the future of your company?*

In this question, Grant employs approximate hedges of quantity abundantly so as to describe the fast developing world of industry with all its complications and stress, which in turn lays pressure upon fashion companies. So, the interviewer shows impreciseness concerning the right amount of things that cannot be precisely measured, which are, competitors, intensity and technology change.

GRANT: *And, for you, his death - how did that impact on you? I'd (MA) imagine it would (MA) be like losing another part of yourself.*

The modal auxiliary (would) occurs here twice. Grant wants to ask about Armani's partner who died years ago and since this is an emotional topic, he tries to approach it indirectly. Grant wants to show solidarity through an attempt to describe what Armani feels about such a loss. He relies upon the modal (would) to refer to the

probable situation, that is, assimilating the death of his friend to a probable loss of another part of Armani's soul.

GRANT: *Armani, of course, is Armani - it's who you are, it's your name, you are so central to the company. What about succession? On the one hand, who **will (MA)** follow you? On the other two, **will (MA)** it **always (AP)** remain a private company?*

The modal (will) is employed to indicate doubt or probability, since the interviewer is wondering about the name of the person nominated to be the new manager or the successor of Armani in Armani's fashion house. Grant then inquires about whether the company will stay private one or not. In doing so, he combines two hedges together, that is, the modal(will)to show uncertainty, and the approximate (always) which is an indication of lack of knowledge about the quantity of time.

GRANT: *So, before I let you go, I have to ask one thing. Anyone watching this is going to think the same thing. How do you do it? How do you look this good and have so much **(AP)** energy? Where does that come from?*

In his final question, Grant asks Armani about the recipe of his success, the source of his energy, and the ability to live a balanced life. He expresses his admiration of Armani's liveliness and activity using the approximates (much) as an exaggeration. Grant does not have the ability to describe the exact amount of energy, so he hedges it.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of hedging usage in Giorgio Armani interview

%35	6	Modal auxiliary verbs
-	-	Modal lexical verbs
%6	1	Adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal phrases
%53	9	Approximates of degree ,quantity and time
%6	1	Discourse epistemic

Transcript of the third interview, (3).

Interviewer: *That **must (MA)** be very precious to you.*

The interviewer draws on the modal auxiliary (must) to express his certainty of Prince William appreciation of leading a normal, simple life. In other words, he stresses the value and importance of such thing. It is also noticed that the interviewer talks on Prince William's behalf stating that it is precious to live like ordinary person. This of course shows solidarity on the part of the interviewer.

Interviewer: *Are you worried about the new pressures you'll **(MA)** face when you leave?*

The interviewer uses the modal auxiliary (will) to talk about the possible responsibilities and tasks that prince William will be in charge of .He wonders if the prince feels worried about facing his new obligations as a prince after finishing his study at college.

Interviewer: *You mentioned the "deal" agreed with the media to let you complete your degree in peace. **Will (MA)** that disappear when you leave St Andrews?*

Here the question is about whether the deal or accord made with media will continue after Prince William departure of St. Andrews, that is, whether they will leave him alone or stalk him all day long. Thus, the interviewer uses the modal auxiliary (will) to question the probability of Prince William continuing his life living in peace away from the paparazzi.

Interviewer: *There was a magazine with your picture on it in a shop window nearby - does that **seem (ML)** odd?*

The interviewer assumes or tries to give his account of the matter through the hedge (seem) which is a modal lexical verb. He reduces the impact of the word (odd) by hedging it. This is an indirect way of addressing what happened with Prince William when his picture was published in a magazine. Hedging it, the interviewer does not commit himself to the utterance giving his interviewee the opportunity to judge it himself.

Interviewer: ***Sand Hurst must (MA)** be a very attractive option.*

The modal auxiliary (must) is used here to reveal the high possibility of Prince William joining the Military College of Sand Hurst since he earlier indicated his willingness to join the armed forces. Here, the interviewee is given the chance to show his solidarity to the utterance.

Interviewer: ***It would (MA)** be a challenge for the people who deploy you on where to send you, the second in line to the throne.*

The interviewer, through the use of the hedge (would), suggests the probability that the decision of Prince William to join the army would confuse and puzzle people in the army. That is, they would wonder where to send him since war does not recognize anybody. They would be concerned about his life, for he is the second in line to the throne of England.

Interviewer: ***Homelessness would (MA)** be one area, **wouldn't (MA)** it?*

In this question, the interviewer asks about the direction of Prince William charity work. He depends on the modal verb (would) to check if it is possible that homelessness is one of the areas that prince William is interested in.

Interviewer: ***Do you think (ML)** that's important?*

The lexical verb (think) is used to express the interviewer doubt of whether Prince William finds attending the national ceremony of Remembrance Day important or not, that is, he is not sure that Prince William would say yes or no. The use of (think) here is a strategy by which the speaker protects himself against any possible criticism.

Interviewer: ***Is it an odd thought that one day you will (MA)** be king? Does it keep you awake?*

Similarly, the interviewer approaches the subject of prince William one day would be a king by using the modal verb (will) asking him if he considers it as an odd thought and whether it keeps him sleepless. Of course, being a king for is something probable, that is why the interviewer uses (will) as a hedge here

Interviewer: ***You've made it clear in the past that you would (MA)** not be a reluctant king.*

The interviewer here questions the certainty that Prince William will keep his word of being not a reluctant King. He has remarked this before and now the interviewer wants to make sure that he did not change his mind. The interviewer employs the hedge (would) for this purpose.

Interviewer: ***What about your dad. You've seemed (ML)** defensive of him in the past in terms of some criticism aimed at him.*

By using the lexical modal (seem), the interviewer is judging and evaluating past events when there were times in which William's father criticized and prince William defended him. So, here the interviewer makes a distance between himself and his utterance and thus mitigates face threats.

Interviewer: *You admire his bluntness, even if(IC) it might (MA) be painful?*

In an attempt to show politeness when talking about royal family members, the interviewer uses the modal auxiliary (might) to reduce the strength of his claim. He indirectly asks Prince William if he admires his grandfather bluntness though it might be harsh at times. That is to say, he puts his words within a frame of uncertainty leaving the final word to say so. In addition, the (if) clause hedge is used to question the possibility that prince William will admire or continue admiring his grandfather rudeness despite of its cruel impact. The interviewer talks about hypothetical conditions, that is, showing uncertainty or doubt of a proposition

Table3: Frequency and percentage of hedging usage in Prince William Interview

Percentage	Frequency	Hedging device category
%71	10	Modal auxiliary verbs
%21	3	Modal lexical verbs
-	-	Adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal phrases
-	-	Approximates of degree ,quantity and time
-	-	Discourse epistemic
%7	1	If clause

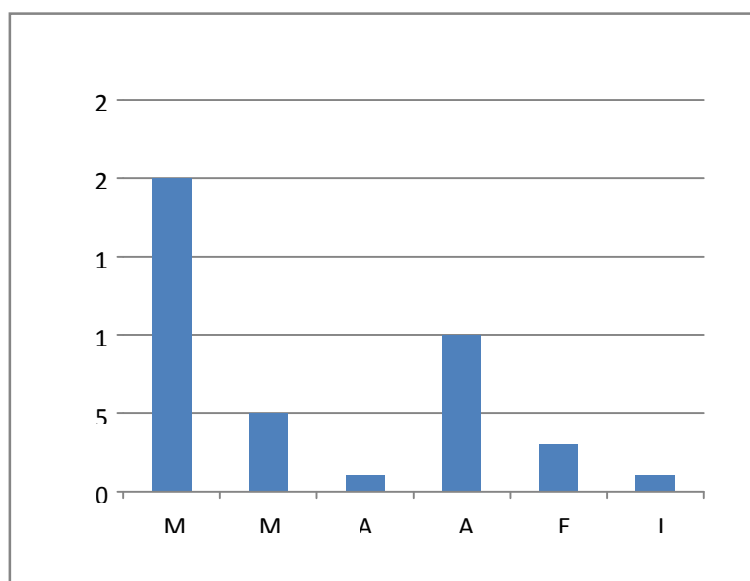


Figure 1: total percentage of interviewers' hedges use

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of Hedging Usage in the three Interviews

Percentage	Frequency	Hedging device category
50%	20	MA
%12	5	ML
%2	1	A
%25	10	AP
%7	3	ED
%2	1	IC

The table above shows that modal auxiliary verbs have scored the highest frequency (21) among other hedging devices. Approximates have taken the second position after modal auxiliary verbs scoring (10). This is so, because approximates

main function is to produce vagueness. They indicate unwillingness to make any complete and precise commitment concerning the proposition expressed. Whereas modal lexical verbs have scored (5). Furthermore, adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases, if clause as well as epistemic discourse have scored the lowest frequency with (1), (1), and (3) respectively.

The low scores imply their insignificant role in hedging speech. Accordingly, these results prove that modal auxiliary verbs are the most frequent device used by interviewers in issuing questions to their interviewees. Obviously, such tendency is due to the fact that modal auxiliaries have the effect of softening and mitigating the speakers commitment to certain propositions.

In other words, they are used in order to add particular kind of uncertainty and thus reducing the strength of the claim. Accordingly, this lack of commitment creates indirectness throughout the process of interviewing and thereby protecting the negative face of the two parties, that is, the interviewer and the interviewee.

2.3 Conclusion

Basing on the findings taken from the statistical analysis, some conclusions can be drawn: the basic hedging device used by the interviewers is modal auxiliary verbs. Interviewers do use them so that they add a degree of uncertainty and non-commitment to an utterance. Most obviously, it should be asserted that the basic function of hedging devices used here in these interviews is to indicate that speakers are not committed to what they say. In other words, they avoid making explicit statements and thus sound more polite. Hedging devices are useful in expressing opinions while softening them in the process. Additionally, it is true that the abundance of hedges or the high frequency of certain devices depends on the nature of the interview, that is to say, whether it is political, social, comic, and serious or the like. Thus, interlocutors resort to utilize the whole potentialities of language to soften the stress occurred between them. One of the available intricacies of language is employing the process of hedging, though, in different degrees to lessen the tension between the participants. Yet, the effectiveness of applying hedging is not identical. This dissimilarity may be ascribed to the agendas, the purposes and the faculties of the speaker to process hedging.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

There are no conflicts of interest

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